1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

Daughters are taught in the same way, but they must give great heed to their mothers who are, in a day-to-day sense, the authority figures in their lives. Although men will respond to questions by saying they have similar discipline and respect for both their father and mother, there is in addition an emotional quality to the mother-son relationship almost wholly lacking in that between the father and his children. For many Kanuri men this is leavened by the high divorce rate that separates them from a continual long-term association with their mothers. But for those who have had consistent long-term associations with their mothers this can be the strongest emotional relationship of an entire lifetime. Thus one young man resigned from a salaried job suddenly one day because, as he said, "I wanted to see my mother and felt she was too far away."

Discipline-respect relationships are qualified by another mode of behavior called *nungu*, or shame-avoidance. This means that the persons in the relationship, especially the junior, must be subdued, self-controlled and constantly be restricted in his behavior to very limited traditional patterns. In the extreme, people who have *nungu* relationships would not eat together from the same bowl, as friends do, and only the most necessary conversation passes between them, while the junior keeps his eyes lowered and is in no way informal. This is best seen when a very friendly person is suddenly confronted with, or is observed with, his own father. His jocularity suddenly disappears; he becomes extremely serious and humble, and never speaks until spoken to unless he has a particular message he has been commissioned to bring. Even then he will wait until asked to state the meassage.

Within the kinship system the epitomy of the *nungu* relationship is that of father and son, but other senior men like father's and mother's brothers as well as older brothers may all have some shame-avoidance in their relationship to a young nephew or brother. Such shame-avoidance increases when the age differences are greater, when the wealth and power of the senior is great, and most particularly if the senior has either taken the place of a dead father, or a young man has been sent to live with his senior male relative so that the older brother or uncle is now his compound head. When there are sex differences as well, then *nungu* is less intense within the descent group but more intense with affines to whom it applies. Thus a Kanuri man will tell his mother things he cannot speak of to his father, and generally he can speak more easily to his mother's and his father's sisters than he can to his uncles. However the most abject avoidance is maintained between in-laws of the opposite sex. Such persons would never allow themselves to be alone together; they avoid each other on a path (the woman steps out of the way with eyes downcast), and they would never speak to one another directly. Because Kanuri girls go to live with their husbands, often close to or in the households of their husband's family, then the burden of such avoidances falls on the bride. Only when the wife and husband move to a household of their own at some remove from that of his parents can the intense avoidance and tension generated by strict *nungu* rules between the young girl and her father-in-law be alleviated.

In the wider society there are *nungu* relations as well. Generally speaking, the greater the discipline-respect, the more likely it is to be associated with *nungu* or shame-avoidance. Thus the relationship between a man and his direct superior in a political or economic organization has many elements of *nungu* connected with it. He rarely speaks directly to his superior, they do not have long conversations, he

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

very often is, by divorce or death, or the movement of its members to a new place. While such changes occur, the household remains; its personnel may change, its landholdings may expand or contract, and its relations with other households through its household head may shift—but people see it as an organization in terms of which settlements are built into larger units; into wards, hamlets, villages, cities, and finally, the state itself.

The personnel of a household is based on that of the family, and generally moves through a cycle that may involve several alternatives to the usual pattern. Let us start with a couple. A young man marries for the first time, and in about sixty percent of the peasant cases recorded for three rural villages in Bornu, he brings his wife to the vicinity of his father's compound or moves into a section of his father's compound. If the latter is the case, he will move to his own compound close by after his own conjugal family (his wife or wives and children) increases in size either through the birth of children or the acquisition of more wives. When his own children grow up, his daughters leave to marry and return from time to time because of divorces or separation from their current spouses. Because many sons bring their wives to their father's household or close by, the original father finds himself the nominal head of a growing patrilocal extended family which, as we shall see in Chapter 6, can in time become a separate ward or sub-ward of the town. When the father dies, the oldest son or the most capable or successful of all sons takes over the compound of the dead father. Lands and goods are apportioned among the male heirs, although the person taking the father's role sometimes takes half the land and divides the rest equally among the living heirs. Thus in one case a man with three brothers took his father's fields and divided them in half. One-half he kept for himself, and the other half he split among the three brothers.

A problem that frequently emerges at this time is that of the mothers of half siblings—the wives of the dead man. The man who takes over his father's compound or household tends to install his own mother there as a dependent, since most old women are without husbands.[2] If she is a vigorous woman, she can become a powerful person in the household. Indeed in the royal household she has a special title, as we have seen, and was traditionally a noble-woman of great power. The other wives of the dead man must go and live with their own kinsmen, usually one of their sons. In one case this problem was intensified by the fact that the household head, a powerful political leader, had only one son and that by a concubine. When the present head dies, his senior wife, a woman of very powerful upper class affiliations will have to leave and her own slave—a woman very much junior to her—will be installed as the senior woman of the household. Such eventualities can cause tension between the members of any household who know that some day the power and authority relationships within the household will change hands.

In the same vein, siblings tend to drift apart after the death of their father. Even though they live close by one another, their unity and cooperation is not as great after the father's death as before. On the other hand, this can be ameliorated by social and economic factors which are important to keep in mind. Thus if a senior brother takes over a powerful political role, or a lucrative economic one, and

[2] As a woman approaches old age she finds it extremely difficult to remarry and thus most old women are resigned to being beyond the marriageable period of their lives.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

so on, report that if they visit the capital of Maiduguri they often go to pay their respects to the Maiduguri head of their own occupation. People felt that rural heads of occupations should always do this, and everyone else should try to do it now and then. Local heads of occupations, no matter where they live, usually do have some privileges. Thus in larger villages and cities, the head butcher has one day a week, not market day, on which his meat alone is sold in villages. In Magumeri the head butcher receives a small commission on all hides and skins sold by the village's butchers.

Very often those in similar occupations live close to one another within a village, and some small hamlets are made up of people devoted almost exclusively to one craft activity. This reflects the fact that sons tend to settle in the vicinity of their fathers especially when they take up the same occupation. Since this is also true of many clients and apprentices, who are non-kin, it is often quite normal to see a hamlet or a ward of a larger village composed of people most of whom practice the same dry season activity.

In analytical terms almost all of Kanuri craft production is characterized by simple technology, cottage industry organization in the same household or a group of closely related households, and by its interrelations with regional and even international competition. Let us go over these points one by one.

Only the simplest tools are required to produce everything made in Bornu, and the materials for these can often be obtained locally. Methods of production are slow and laborious. For example, an ordinary blacksmith working at home, as they all do, can make from three to five hoes a day; or a dyer working over his dye vat can color five or six robes in a busy day with no disturbances. A potter makes from ten to twenty pots a week, depending upon the type of pots being turned out. Compared to the productivity of more industrialized workers in Africa itself or other parts of the world, such outputs are almost infinitesimal. Production itself is almost always carried on in small groups located inside the household of a craftworker. In this sense Bornu craft production is of the cottage industry type. Sometimes a group of craftsmen work together in their own ward of the town, especially when the group includes a number of agnatically related kinsmen among its members. This means that a craftsman spends his working hours at home or close by in a neighbor's household, and these neighbors are often close kin. In some special cases craft work is organized along some other lines. Thus the blind people, who often live together in a ward of their own, produce rope and then sell it in one section of the market. It is an occupation that can be practiced by the blind and affords them some means of livelihood in the community.

Unlike food production in which the Bornu area provides almost everything they require in the way of staples, Kanuri crafts have never been totally self-sufficient. Thus iron for blacksmiths, dyes for clothes, paper, textiles, or glass beads have always come from outside Bornu. Furthermore there has always been competition between locally manufactured articles and those from other parts of the Sudan. This works both ways so that Bornu knives are accepted and coveted items in many markets all over the Sudan, while leather work from Kano can be seen all over Bornu and is always in high demand. On a more local level in a small village like Magumeri, craftwork from other villages almost always finds its way into the local market to compete with items produced in Magumeri. Such openness means that

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

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The Political Organization

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THE POLITICAL LIFE of Bornu ties togther the entire society into one overall unit so that it has an identity. As far as we know this has been the case for centuries and still is today, so that, although the Kanuri people see themselves and their society as many things, they view it primarily or basically as a political entity. To the people who live there Bornu represents a culture, a language, an ancient history, but more than anything else it represents a kingdom, or sovereign realm whose definition is political. Thus whether anyone belongs to it or not, and how one should behave within its boundaries depends first and foremost on its organization as a polity, that is, as a system in which there are recognized and legitimate means of distributing authority and making decisions at all levels of the society.

Authority distinctions are present in all organizations, and from this point of view all organizations have a political aspect. However, for our purposes it is easier to limit the discussion to the means by which decisions are made and carried out in those particular sectors of social life having some territorial or bureaucratic identity as sub-parts of the emirate government of Bornu. This excludes such things as trade groupings, like that of Ajimi's uncle described in the last chapter in which there is some hierarchy of authority, but which may not be, and often is not, located in one place. It also means that what we are discussing is a system, since each of its parts is clearly connected to the other to form a working whole. Like most other aspects of Bornu life, this system starts with the household as a basic particle and then builds onto it. It is a complicated and interwoven structure of an ancient, majestic, and yet contemporary kingdom whose stability and adaptability are monuments to men's striving for these illusive goals.

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Households, Wards, and Hamlets

As we have seen in Chapter 3 a household can expand and become a group of linked households under the superior authority of a senior man. When a young man, or a man's younger brother, or his apprentice or client, wishes to get mar-

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

ried he must decide where he will set up a house. There are three possible alternatives: (a) he can bring his wife into the house of his father or older brother, or patron whoever the superior man might be; (b) he can set up his own compound close by; or (c) he can move further away and become independent or subordinate to someone else. The decision depends upon whether or not the young man is benefiting from the previous relationship, in which case he usually stays in or near the original compound, or whether he believes himself to be suffering from it, in which case he moves or tries to move away, or near to someone more powerful, influential, and economically beneficent with whom he can associate. The decision is often a very complicated one because myriads of other factors enter into it. Thus if there is a large age discrepancy between a younger man and his older brother, and the father is dead, the younger one may feel that his older brother will never treat him as a man but always as a "young boy." Or if there are brothers and some are full (same mother, same father) while some are half (only one parent in common) then the half brothers are less close and are usually linked to different groups of people through their mothers. One young man told me confidentially that he was worried about whether his father would continue to be successful and whether he should not try to use some of his father's powerful connections in Bornu to become the client of a more important person whose position was even more impressive and more secure than that of his own parents. On the other hand many people would speak about leaving home and setting up households on their own or under influential men and never seem to get around to doing it. When asked about this they replied that this was their home, these were their relatives, and whether it was beneficial or not they ought to stay with their kinsfolk. For them blood is thicker than water, that is to say, they feel their roots in a kinship unit must be the eventual determinant of where they spend their lives.

It is these processes of household growth, and associations between households, that underlie the formation of small-scale political units in Kanuri society. The process can best be seen by observing a real life situation. About three miles southwest of Magumeri is the small hamlet of Gworongo (population circa 250–300) which falls within the boundaries of Magumeri village area. Surrounding the hamlet are small bramble-fenced plots of a special crop called *gworongo* which gives the hamlet its name. This plant is used by women as a stimulant and cosmetic along with tobacco flowers. In 1953 one of these farmers, a man named Aji, moved out of the hamlet and set up a compound near his plots of gworongo. He says he wished to be closer to his fields; others gossiped that he had quarreled with the hamlet head of Gworongo over taxes. With him moved his two wives, a younger brother, and the latter's wife, and two unmarried sons. One of these sons left about a year later to go and live in Maiduguri with his father's younger brother. The other son married in 1957 and brought his wife to live in the compound near his father. A stranger to Gworongo hamlet arrived in 1954 and cut a bush farm for himself about one mile to the north of the settlement. He had no wife at the time and asked Aji if he could build a hut near the new settlement and take his meals in Aji's compound. For this hospitality he helped Aji on the *gworongo* plots, prepared household fences, and sometimes gathered grass for Aji's horse. He has since married with both a loan and some gifts from Aji and is now a settled member of the new "community-in-the-becoming." He says that Aji is his *abba njima*, and he is a tada njima or client of the settlement head.

584 boy; if she does not and refuses to marry him, the arrangements are for naught. The father cannot force the marriage, and marriages arranged solely by parents over the objection of the children, cannot take place.

582 369 Average age at which boys marry differs from the small villages to the larger towns. In the small villages boys marry young, and when they reach the age of eighteen or nineteen all are married. In the large towns and cities, boys marry after age twenty, and some do not marry until they reach thirty. Girls marry at the same age in the villages and in the cities.

582 If the girl's family is able to provide her with household equipment and clothing, she will marry at the age of eleven or twelve. If the family is poor she will marry slightly later, at the age of thirteen or fourteen. The minimum age of marriage for a girl is ten. A marriage at that age is possible, but the girl is con-

[833] sidered young. A husband usually waits before beginning to have sexual intercourse with a bride of such tender years. A boy

[591] may marry at the very young age of twelve or thirteen. If his father wishes to arrange such a marriage, he will build his son a house adjacent to his own, and husband and wife will grow up together. A boy will postpone marriage in order to accumulate money for a bride-price. If the father of a boy has no money to pay the bride-price for his son, the boy will postpone marriage for several years while father and son farm and save money. A girl never postpones marriage; by the age of fifteen almost all girls are married.

586 578 152 where a former spouse might attack his wife's new lover with a knife.

3. Residence.

591 593 369 183 It is usually stated that after marriage, a boy's father builds his house for him if he is able to, and he builds his son's house close to his own. This is subject to a number of qualifications, the foremost being the all-pervading difference between rural and urban Kanuri culture. In the rural villages the ideal is frequently realized, and the son marries and lives [606] not far from the house of his mother and father. His wives then prepare meals for their mother- and father-in-law, as well as for their husband. The old mother continues to cook for her husband, but her daughter-in-law sends her additional food as well. However, if there is no plot of land on which to build a house adjacent to his father's house, the son's house may be built any place else. If the boy's father is dead, his mother may build the house for him, or he may work and earn money with which he may build his own house. If the boy's father is a poor man and has no money for building his son's house, his son may leave the village, marry elsewhere, and build his house in another village or another town. If he marries a girl whose father is a rich man, the father-in-law may build a house for his daughter and her husband, though it is much more common for the father of the boy to build the house. If a man with a rich farm has several daughters and no sons, his sons-in-law may come to live near his house and help him farm.

near his house and help him farm.

In the towns, the situation is much more fluid, and wealth differences are more pronounced. Consequently there is considerable mobility and a greater tendency for sons to strike out on their own. In addition, there is a constant stream of younger people moving from the villages to the towns and cities, and from one town to another. These conditions, taken together with the relaxed attitude which the Kanuri hold toward a standard rule of residence (that is, that ideally sons should live close to their fathers, though other forms are equally acceptable), would lead one to conclude that post-marital residence among the Kanuri exhibits a tendency towards initial patrilocal residence, particularly in the rural areas, but that neolocal residence is more characteristic of the entire society.

When parents grow old, a married son or married daughter can bring them to live in his or her home. A married son may build a house close to his own for his old parents to live in, and would supply them with food and clothing. A man may be required by the Alkali to send food to his old parents, but he is not forced to build a house for them close to his own.

b. The Family.

As is evident from the above discussion of postmarital residence, extended families when they do occur among the Kanuri, are exceptional since most frequently postmarital residence is neolocal. At certain times, as when a young married couple live

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602 of the first ascendant generation and is sometimes extended to spouse's senior siblings, real and classificatory. The second term tiu (junior in-laws) refers to spouse's collaterals and descendant generation kin members. The terms kàsai and tiu can be used to address all relations by marriage if the speaker so desires. Thus, ego's daughter's husband can be a tiu and the father of this person can be addressed as kàsai. Or again a sibling's spouse can be addressed as tiu and the parents of this person are kàsai. Consanguinal terms are used for spouses of parents' collaterals and a spouse's grandparents are given the same term as own grandparents. However, dur does not apply to affines of any kind unless there has been a nyia durbe (kin marriage), i.e. a cousin marriage.

602 For reasons of residence, inheritance and legal responsibility, ties with the father's and mother's kin are of a different
[591] kind. The high proportion of patrilocal marriages as well as the
[428] differential division of inheritance as between males and females on
[671] the one hand and agnatic and uterine kin on the other in Maliki law tends to emphasize the father's agnatic group as the more important.(1) It is also the agnatic kin of the father who go to court to support ego and who help him to pay fines.

601 Terms of reference are most generally formed from the
[193] terms of address by adding the possessive pronoun at the end of the word. Thus ya (mother) can be yanyi (my mother) or yanun (your
[603] mother) or yanzà (his/her mother). Due to the reciprocal nature of the joking relationship between grandparent and grandchild, the term of address (grandparent speaking) is kaka, and is used reciprocally, while the differentiated term for grandchild (diwo) is used primarily

(1) Buxton, F.H.; Maliki Law, (London) 1914, pp. 373-397.

171 602 The aman with the matrilateral group (to which Smith refers (1) for the Hausa) is a variety of mutual risk-sharing based on affection and the much more limited scope for conflict found in this less complex relational system. 66.

602 433 On the face of it, the distinctions within the descent system would seem to have much significance for the analysis of commercial growth in Bornu. If there is more and easier credit facilities in the interpersonal relationships of the matrilateral group, it would seem as if this might be a useful model of organisation for future economic development, which requires credit and loans.

602 571 [433] A swift look in any direction at functioning social relations in Kanuri society is enough to dispel such a theory. And the answer is quite simple but important. In the last analysis trust based merely on affection and lack of conflicting interests is not adequate to the task of maintaining the complex interrelationships necessary for the continuity of social life. To obtain a workable social organization of any kind requires power and authority and discipline, and these are patently scarce in the matrilateral structure, or at least much less intensified while they are key aspects of the patrilateral system. Besides this, indeed as an integral part of it, there is the more fundamental distinction of territoriality. Although aman of an affective nature which can involve potential risk-sharing of property is present with the mother's kin group, there is in most cases no inherent social organization in the mother's family which joins her and the rest of her relatives together as a functioning social unit in any one place. The custom of patrilocal and/or neolocal marriage forbids such an eventuality. By the same token, ordinary friendships beyond the kinship system include varying amounts of this same kind of aman when occurring between social equals.

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(1) Smith, M.G. The Economy of Hausa Communities of Zaria, Colonial Research Studies No. 16 (The Colonial Office, London) 1955, p. 47.

571 602 individuals involved and traditionally as a cultural value also increases as simple nona is made more rewarding by the progressive addition of more and more patri-anan.

Joking Relationships (suli)

Joking relationships (suli) among the Kanuri refer to a quality in interpersonal relations wherein the customary behavioural restrictions based on seniority, generation and sex differences are relaxed and a formalised pattern of permissiveness of some kind obtains between the parties.

603 The most diffuse or broadly based joking relationship is that between ego and his grandparents and great-grandparents, if [855] [591] any of the latter are alive. In many cases Kanuri children are partially raised by their grandparents, being taken from their moth- [553] er just after weaning. This is especially true when the child is called after his grandparent which is often the case since naming customs generally bring names from alternate generations down the descent system. The child usually has the most int[redacted]nd fondest joking relationship with his namesake grandparent, if t[redacted]erson lives close by or adopts him. When this is not the case, the grandparent residing closest is the person with whom a more intimate 553 joking relationship is established. The naming rule gives no prefer- 602 ence to matrilateral or patrilateral kinship; successive children must be named after and/or adopted by each of the spouse's parents alternatively. Thus neither side must obtain a namesake from the same marriage union twice in a row. The reason given for this custom of alternation is that it helps to prevent conflict and jealousy between a man and his wife as well as between the married couple and

553 602 their respective kindred and in-laws. There is no rule about which group should take precedence although the comparative social status of the patrilateral and matrilateral kin seems to be a major factor in the decision. Informants claimed that the child must be taken away from his grandparents some time before puberty and brought under the direct control of his parents so that he (or she) may learn proper respect (bàrsum) because there is no bàrsum, they said, when there is much suli. Table I indicates that this latter judgment is only an approximation to the overall pattern since 14.9% of all responses by ego to grandparents indicate the presence of some respect (bàrsum) behaviour. As a general rule the reciprocality of the joking relationships between alternate generations of the kinship system, extending to include the third ascendant and descendant generations (the yeiya) follows a pattern of more respect between ego and his grandparents and more freindship and fondness between ego and his grandchildren.

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It is not uncommon to see a grandparent visiting his or her friends always in the company of their little joking partners. As the friends sit down to chat of the latest gossip of the day, the grandchild plays nearby, then comes over and nestles in the grandparent's arms, pulls at articles of dress on his person, or pulls at grandfather's beard, and acts generally in a quietly affectionate manner. The observer is struck more with the genuine fondness and affection of the relationship, at its early stages, than with its so-called joking content. As the child grows older the joking aspect becomes more noticeable. The grandparent will point out a young playmate of the opposite sex and say to him -

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[241] These three compound heads all farm near one another on the split-up land of their Mo-Bro (they also have cleared other plots), often helping one another in farming duties. They present a united front to the community at large and if one appears in court, the others will also be present.

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593 The youngest half-brother also learned the butcher's craft, but he has married and moved away to another section of the butcher's quarter and today has virtually nothing to do with his three half-brothers. Some of this half-brother's statements indicate the background of disunity among siblings. He had been raised until puberty in the house of X who was married to his Mo-Sis in the capital. After puberty he came to the house of his Mo-Bro in Magumeri, who was now dead and whose place as compound head had been
592 taken by the eldest of the half-brothers. This brother "taught him
593 the knife" (i.e. instructed him in butchering) and he in his turn
874 gave <u>birzum</u> (respect) to the half-brother, who was now also his compound head. Here is a paraphrase translation of his own attitude to the relationship:

> I did not have a father and was now living in the house of my elder brother, who was head of the house — therefore I had to give to my brother the same respect as a father and keep myself under his orders. I wanted a wife (all my other brothers had married and moved out to form their own households by now), but my eldest brother ordered me to wait patiently until I learned the occupation properly — he said — continue to stay in my house and carry grass for my horse, and learn the butcher's trade and I will feed you and give you money for spending and buy your clothes. But I was not happy and saved my money in secret and saved enough to take a wife of my own — they were cheap in those days. My older brother was angry and did not agree to the marriage but he still wished for me to stay in the compound — but I did not wish to do this and so I moved away to a house that X, the husband of my Mo-Sis in Maiduguri, owned here in the butcher's quarter.

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He has now obtained some farmland from a friend and all his primary relationships are with non-kin members (X is dead). His extreme youth, plus his absence at the time of the Mo-Bro death as compared with his brothers' presence in the compound, left him out of the inheritance and allowed the three half-brothers to parcel out the farmland among themselves. He feels today that there is gădena abeji, a difference or bad feeling between him and his half-brothers.

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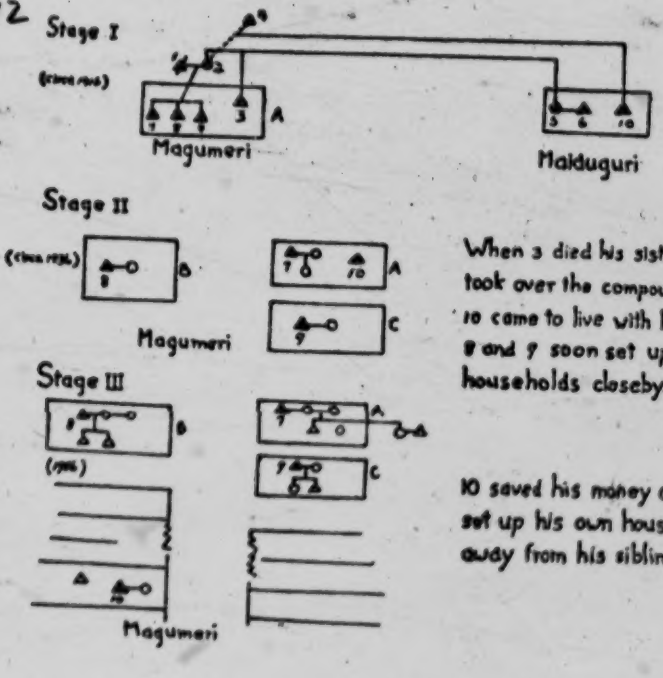
The following diagram illustrates the processes of the above example.


Stage I
Magumeri
Makduguri
Stage II
Magumeri
When 3 died his sister's eldest son took over the compound (A), and so came to live with him. Siblings 8 and 9 soon set up their own households closeby.
Stage III
Magumeri
10 saved his money and finally set up his own household (D) away from his siblings.

Legend:
(1) Mo-dead-husband; (2) Mo; (3) Mo-Bro; (4) Mo-next-husband (divorced later); (5) Mo-Sis; (6) Mo-Sis-Hu; (7), (8), (9) full siblings; (10) half-sibling to 7, 8, 9.

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Several comparable processes to the above were recorded except that the defunct relative whose demise caused the shift in power relations was an agnatic relative. The overall pattern is as follows: a patrilocal extended family residence may break up while the household head is still living to form an identical but often smaller structure near at hand or far away. The mobile member sets up his new compound unit with his own nuclear or polygynous family group as the constituent members. Another and somewhat similar process occurs when a compound head dies leaving several sons in the household. In these circumstances the senior son takes over the headship of his father's compound and assumes an authoritative position over his siblings. But this second variety tends to give way in time to a series of smaller residence groups. That is to say, a group of new households are set up under each sibling as he departs [591] from his senior brother's compound. Thus there is a process in Kanuri residence patterns in which each married man attempts to set up [621] his own household with himself as compound head. However, factors of power and authority tend very often to create superior subordinate relations among groups of households which then become extended household organizations.

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In the Kanuri residence groupings, the most satisfactory organization for the operation of power and authority is the type in which a senior person who is the father or acts like a father to all the members of the compound commands much of the action of the group. As we have seen in the analysis of bərzum its strongest form centres around the relationship of father to son while the relation weakens somewhat as ego relates himself to parent's collater-

3: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1960 MS14 Kanuri MS14

CHAPTER V [p. 99]

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Marriage Relations

Kanuri marriages are virilocal from the point of view of the woman, which means that she always leaves her residence to live in the compound of her husband. From the point of view of the man, marriages are patrilocal or neolocal. Thus a man either brings his wife to the compound of his father or very close to it, or else takes his wife to a new residence away from the residences of both their kin groups. Thirty-eight out of sixty-one informants in Magumeri reported bringing their first wives to the house of their own father or setting up a contiguous compound. For successive wives the number dropped to about one-half of those asked.

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429 The inception of the first marriage for young girls is decided upon by her family and chiefly among these her luwali or guardian,(1) who is most commonly the head of the household in which the girl is living at the time of her marriage. A luwali can stand in various relational positions to the young girl - he may be her father, her elder brother, her cross-cousin, or patrilateral parallel-cousin, or adoptive parent. When the household head is not the luwali, which can occur for example in the case of cousin wardship, then the luwali still has the rights of marriage dispensation over the girl. Indeed he would take anyone to court who tried to inveigle these rights away from him. Although such cases are known they are quite rare.

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429 The luwali's choice of potential husband is based on the availability of males seeking virgin wives plus his desire to create profitable relationships for himself. If he is a high status person, his wife-giving rights will be used most commonly to tie political and/or

(1) C.F., "Iugali" in Ellision, R.E., Marriage and Childbirth Among the Kanuri, Africa; Vol. 9, 1936, pp. 524-535.

597 [565] population of Bornu. The practice seems more frequent among the upper classes of society where the young child and his growing ability to contribute services to the household are a less vital consideration. [603] As noted in the last chapter the most frequent destination of adoptions is the grandparent and if possible the namesake grandparent. Informants gave, as one reason for this practice, the claim of fondness-affection which the grandparent holds for the child, especially when there is a namesake relationship between them. Another reason, less often reported but still important, is the inability of the young child to behave in the culturally prescribed manner to parents. That there is some validity to this latter view is indicated by the fact that the custom of adoption is not permanent but temporary. It is arranged before the birth of the child, begins just before weaning, and ends [591] around the time of puberty. That is to say, the child returns to his parent's home when he is more able to conform to the social requirements of parent-child, especially father-child relations. Whether this is the reason for adoptions is difficult to say, certainly it is one effect or result of the custom.

597 601 In non-grandparent adoptions the person adopting the child is called by the correct kinship term. If there is no kinship term, the male head of the house is generally addressed as Aba (father), and referred to in the same way or as Aba njima (father of the house), while his wives are addressed and referred to as bawa (Fa-Sis). If there is some special relationship, such as a common name between the 597 child and the compound head, the proper term will be used. At all times 602 during his adoption the child is made aware of his status. He knows who his real parents are, whether or not they are alive and well, where they live and what they do, and who and what his relations are to other people in terms of his real father and mother.

794 793 mitted to as a superior whose authority is unquestioned. In other cases, mallams near at hand or in the compound take up the job and the (871) child is not forced to leave home. Today there is the added possibility of receiving religious instruction in the government schools. However, this is still rare in rural areas.

• 591 By the age of ten or twelve years, a young Kanuri boy may have lived in quite a number of households. One informant related how he was adopted by his grandfather at weaning, given to a wandering mallam at the age of six, entered Junior Primary School as a boarder at nine, and entered the service of a District Head at the age of thirteen. This is not an extreme case, especially when the high rate of divorce is considered. Thus a young boy or girl, especially the former, can find himself in one to five or more different households or primary 591 571 group settings by the time he has reached early adolescence. It may be proper here to ask who is the authority figure in the young child's life; who is it that in his person embodies or symbolizes authority? And the answer is of fundamental importance —— no one. The Kanuri child learns, whether he lives in one compound or many, that his society is a system of ranked hierarchies in which there are many people to whom he must give respect and subordination.

Puberty

561 By the end of childhood, as the Kanuri define it (which means somewhere between the ages of nine to thirteen), the sex roles and many of their accompanying behaviours have been established. From this period onward the development towards adult status is sharply dif- 881 582 ferentiated for males and females. Somewhere around puberty a young girl is given in virgin marriage by her father or the person who has been designated as having the power of marriage dispensation over her. Male

602 overlapping areas of norms of behavior, each of which includes kin and
571 non-kin relationships. These are, namely, shame-avoidance (nungu), dis-
[183] cipline-respect (bàrzum), joking (suli), and friendship (nunkam). The mutual expectations accompanying these norms of behavior are the "warp and woof" of Kanuri interpersonal relations. Or to put it another way, they are the building blocks upon which the Kanuri social structure maintains itself as an ongoing system.

This is especially true of the bàrzum relationship. The Kanuri social structure is hierarchical and feudal, and in order to accompliah the tasks necessary to any human society within this kind of organizational framework, the Kanuri require a multitude of diffuse social relations arranged into chains of superior/subordinate relationships. The rules governing behavior within these superior/subordinate relations are encompassed by the concept or norms of bàrzum and thus this particular set of mutual expectations is of central importance to the perpetuation of Kanuri society in its present form.

602 Some of the dynamics of interpersonal relations are apparent
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• 591 in the residence patterns. Because a social structure is placed in time, birth, maturation and death continually create changes in personnel, as well as in their roles and aspirations. As we have seen, this can affect Kanuri residence associations in two ways. A man may desire to set up his own household and thus hive off from the patrilocal residence to
[592] initiate a residence group under his own direction. Again, a father or senior man of the patrilocal compound may die, leaving a group of siblings under the direction of a senior sibling. This also tends through time to break up into smaller residence units which are on the way potentially to becoming patrilocal extended households.

602 These structural features are in their turn functions of
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